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Rediscover Your Public Lands



United States
Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

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1995

The Bureau of Land Management . . .

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), celebrating its 50th year, administers what remains of the Nation's vast land holdings — the public domain. The public domain once stretched from the Appalachian Mountains to the Pacific Ocean. In historian Frederick Jackson Turner's words, it was "the richest free gift that was ever spread out before civilized man."

Of the original 1.8 billion acres of public lands owned by the United States, two-thirds went to citizens, corporations, and the States. Many of the remaining lands were set aside for national forests, wildlife refuges, parks, and monuments.

BLM manages the remaining 270 million acres — about one-eighth of America's land surface, or 41 percent of the lands under Federal ownership. Most BLM-managed public lands are located in the 11 Western States, including Alaska, although small parcels are scattered throughout the Eastern United States. BLM also manages 570 million acres of subsurface mineral estate.

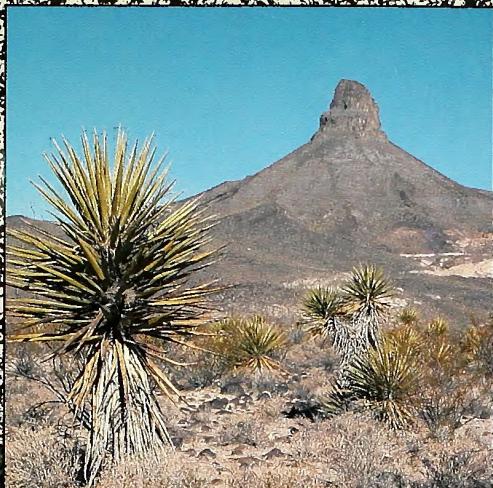
Use of the public lands has changed throughout our Nation's history and continues to evolve. Originally viewed as the Great American Desert, these lands over time came to be regarded primarily as a source of livestock forage, timber, and energy and mineral resources. Today, the public lands are valued more and more for their environmental resources, the recreational opportunities they offer, the cultural resources they contain, and, in an increasingly urban world, their vast open spaces.

To meet today's changing and diverse demands, BLM is changing its management of the public lands. To maintain the health of the public lands, the agency is taking a "big picture" or landscape approach to land management. This promotes both biological diversity on the public lands and sustainable development of their resources. BLM's mandate under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 is to manage the public lands for multiple uses, while protecting the long-term health of the land.



History of the Public Lands

In 1812, Congress established the General Land Office (GLO) to administer the 1.8-billion-acre public domain. The passage of the Taylor Grazing Act in 1934 established the U.S. Grazing Service to provide active range management on public domain lands. In 1946, the U.S. Grazing Service and the GLO merged to become the Bureau of Land Management. "With that date," noted historian E. Louise Peffer, "there opened a new chapter in the history of public land administration in the United States."



BLM at a Glance . . .

Healthy Productive Lands

BLM is committed to maintaining the health and productivity of our Nation's public lands by relying on sound scientific and technical information regarding soils, water, vegetation, wildlife, and other components of the natural environment. BLM scientists examine how natural components relate to each other and how they can be used in a responsible and sustainable way to meet human needs for food, shelter, energy, and other commodities. BLM works extensively with the public and many diverse groups to determine the best uses of the public lands.

Opportunities for a Wide Variety of Commercial Uses

BLM authorizes nearly 20,000 Western ranchers to use public rangelands, sells as much as 170 million board feet of sawtimber and other forest products annually, and issues thousands of leases each year for oil and gas or geothermal exploration and development. Public lands are made available for coal production, gold and silver mining, sand and gravel operations, electrical transmission lines, hunting and fishing guide services, and movie filming. BLM lands have starred in *Maverick*, *Lonesome Dove*, *City Slickers*, several *Star Trek* episodes, and many other film and television productions.

BLM manages a range of activities to ensure the long-term health and productivity of the public lands and conducts numerous onsite inspections to guarantee compliance. Lands must be restored after construction, mining, filming, or other activities have been completed. Taken together, commercial uses of public lands generate over \$1 billion in revenue that either goes into the U.S. Treasury or is shared with State, local, and tribal governments.

Opportunities for Recreation and Leisure Activities

BLM public lands are noted for providing wide-open spaces rather than highly developed recreation sites. While the Bureau does manage close to 1,000 developed sites (campgrounds, picnic areas, etc.), most of the emphasis is on providing areas and trails for biking, hiking, camping, fishing, and similar activities. BLM lands are unparalleled in their diversity, offering rainforest ecosystems, desert landscapes, rugged peaks over 14,000 feet high, and more than 170,000 miles of fishable streams. And BLM's 63 National Backcountry Byways and 300 Watchable Wildlife sites provide access to the breathtaking beauty and adventure these lands offer.

The abundant wildlife that live on public lands — an estimated 1.5 million deer, 250,000 elk, and 25,000 bighorn sheep, plus many other species — add to the outdoor recreational experience. And the 40,000-plus wild horses and burros that roam BLM lands provide a unique reminder of the history of the American West. At a time when city dwellers and suburbanites feel a growing need to "get away from it all," our Nation's public lands are providing a recreational escape for millions of Americans.

Preservation of Significant Cultural and Natural Features

The Federal Government is responsible for preserving and protecting significant archaeological, paleontological, and historical sites, as well as outstanding natural areas. BLM has inventoried over 10 million acres for cultural resources and has recorded approximately 180,000 properties. The Bureau manages over 1.6 million acres of designated wilderness lands and provides special management for an additional 25 million acres of lands designated as Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, Research Natural Areas, National Conservation Areas, and National Natural Landmarks. Ecosystem conditions for threatened or endangered plants and animals are closely monitored to help ensure the survival of protected species. BLM's long-term mission is to provide the opportunity to use, share, and appreciate these precious resources while protecting and conserving them for future generations.

Land Resources and Title Information

BLM is the custodian of the public lands records for the United States Government. Over the years, the Bureau has developed a land records system using a microfilming process. BLM is now in the process of automating land records. Automation will streamline the Bureau's responses to public inquiries, facilitate processing applications and permits, improve access to land records and resource data, ensure accuracy and

consistency of data, and improve planning, tracking, and evaluation of uses on the public lands.

Public Health, Safety, and Resource Protection

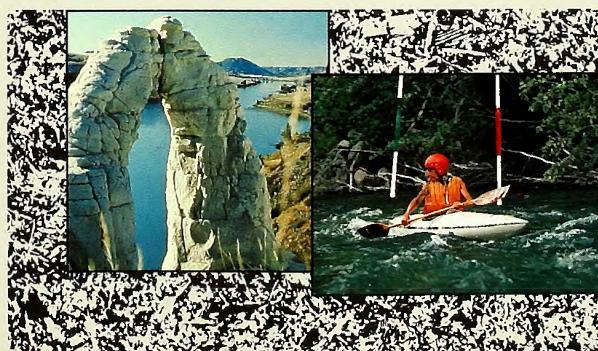
BLM has a variety of programs to protect public health, safety, and property. The Bureau is responsible for protecting public lands from illegal dumping of hazardous materials, theft of Federal property, misuse of resources, and wildfire. In a typical year, the Bureau helps suppress several thousand wildfires that burn well over half a million acres of Federal and State public lands. If theft or unauthorized use occurs, BLM moves promptly to investigate the incident and recover full compensation. When hazardous substances — old dynamite at an abandoned mining site or discarded barrels of toxic waste — are discovered on public lands, BLM acts quickly to eliminate risks to the public. And BLM employees, acting on their own or as members of teams, have carried out countless search and rescue operations involving hikers, boaters, and others who are lost or injured.

Land Exchanges

Today, BLM strives to improve efficiency by consolidating lands into manageable areas through land exchanges. These land transactions also improve the management of natural resources by protecting endangered species, promoting biological diversity, increasing recreational opportunities, and preserving archaeological and historical sites.

Technical and Economic Assistance

BLM provides State, local, and tribal governments with certain types of technical and economic assistance. This assistance is one more aspect of the partnerships BLM is building and maintaining in its overall effort to resolve problems and implement solutions in collaboration with others.



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A Brief Overview . . .

The Mission

BLM sustains the health, diversity, and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.

The Agenda

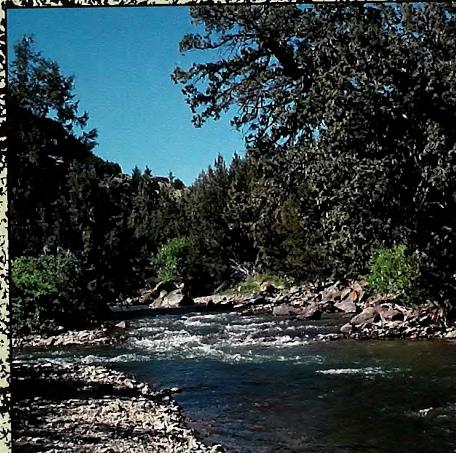
- Maintain Healthy Ecosystems
- Serve Current and Future Publics
- Promote Collaborative Leadership
- Improve Business Practices
- Improve Human Resource Management Practices

The Vision

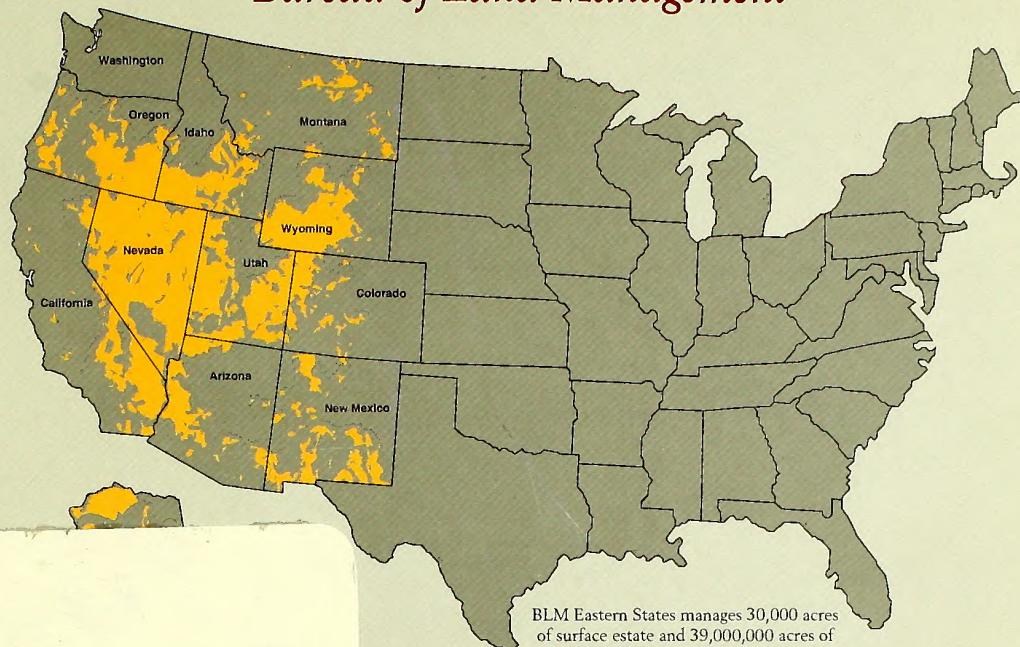
- Provide for a wide variety of public land uses without compromising the long-term health and diversity of the land and without sacrificing significant natural, cultural, and historical values;
- Understand the arid, semiarid, and other ecosystems it manages and commit to using the best scientific and technical information to make resource management decisions;
- Resolve problems and implement solutions in collaboration with other agencies; State, local, and tribal governments, and the public;
- Understand the needs of rural and urban publics and provide them with quality service;
- Maintain a skilled and highly professional workforce;
- Clearly define and achieve objectives through the efficient management of financial, human, and information resources;
- Efficiently and effectively manage land records and other spatial data;
- Recover a fair return for the use of publicly owned resources and reduce long-term liabilities for the American taxpayer.

The Organization

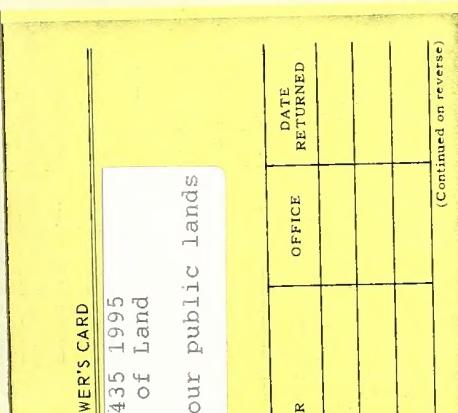
With an annual budget of more than \$1.1 billion, BLM employs about 11,000 permanent and seasonal or temporary workers. BLM is headquartered in Washington, D.C., in the historic Department of the Interior Building. Additionally, there are 12 State Offices and almost 200 field offices; the National Interagency Fire Center in Boise, Idaho; the National Applied Resource Sciences Center, National Business Center, and National Human Resources Management Center in Denver, Colorado; and the National Training Center in Phoenix, Arizona.



Public Lands Administered by the Bureau of Land Management



BLM Eastern States manages 30,000 acres of surface estate and 39,000,000 acres of subsurface mineral estate in 31 States east of and bordering on the Mississippi River.



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